

Well, good morning.

Faced with an unprecedented threat to our health and safety... faced with the very real prospect of patients being turned away from overwhelmed hospitals...

Faced with the consequences of inaction...

This virus has consistently forced us to make decisions that no one ever wanted to make.

Looking at where we were...and how far we've come pushing Omicron back...there's no doubt these were the right decisions.

There's no doubt they protected our hospitals from collapse and saved lives.

Today we are on track to very soon remove almost all restrictions for businesses as a part of our reopening plan.

And we heard from Dr. Moore last week, and again yesterday... that he is now working on a plan that will allow us to remove the vaccine passport system.

My friends... this is great news and a sign of just how far we have come together in this fight.

But this progress doesn't change what we've been through.

Because the truth is, this virus forced us to make unthinkable sacrifices.
And I know that this has been extremely difficult.

Watching businesses close... livelihoods lost...

Freedoms restricted.

None of this has been easy. People are frustrated...they're scared...they're angry.

And I know these frustrations have reached a boiling point for many Canadians.

The result is what we're now seeing in various cities across our province and our country.

My friends... one of the great things about living in Canada is our right to free speech...

The right to choose our government by voting for the leaders that best represent us.

The right to peacefully protest when we disagree with what our government is doing.

But like all rights, these are not without reasonable limits.

Our economy in Ontario is built on trade...especially with our partners in the United States.

The Ambassador Bridge in Windsor alone sees \$700 million of two-way trade every single day.

And that trade employs hundreds of thousands of Ontarians...who work in auto plants and factories across our great province.

Those jobs feed millions of families. They are a lifeline for our province and its economy.

And while I appreciate the right to protest...that right can not... it must not... extend to cutting off that lifeline.

We are now two weeks into the siege of the City of Ottawa. I call it a siege because that is what it is. It's an illegal occupation.

This is no longer a protest. With a protest, you peacefully make your point and you go back home.

And I know that the vast majority of people did that. They came... they peacefully demonstrated...they made their point...and they left.

And I want to say to those people...you have been heard... Canada has heard you.

My message to those still in Ottawa...to those at our border crossings...go home.

To those of you who have brought your children...please... take them home.

I urge you...it's time to leave. And it's time to do so peacefully.

But...to the very small groups who've chosen to take a different path...

To those who have chosen to take a city of 1 million people hostage for the past two weeks...

To those who have attempted to disrupt our way of life... by targeting our lifeline for food, fuel and goods across our borders... to those trying to force a political agenda through disruption, intimidation and chaos...

My message to you is this...

Your right to make a political statement does not outweigh the right of tens of thousands of auto workers to earn their living...

It does not outweigh our right to get food across our borders...

Your right to make a political statement does not outweigh the rights of 1 million people in Ottawa to live peacefully, free of harassment and chaos in their own homes.

So...let me be as clear as I can.

There will be consequences for these actions...and they will be severe.

We've already started by going after the money funding the illegal occupation.

Yesterday, an Ontario court granted our request to freeze the funds from GiveSendGo for the convoy.

The OPP has also provided additional resources to Ottawa Police Services and Windsor Police Services to satisfy their recent requests for operational support.

More needs to be done.

We are strengthening our police forces' tools and powers to resolve this situation and restore order.

Let me be clear, the government does not direct our police forces... but we do set the laws and we do direct our crown prosecutors.

Today, I am using my authority as Premier of Ontario to declare a state of emergency in our province.

And I will convene Cabinet to use legal authorities to urgently enact orders that will make crystal clear it is illegal and punishable to block and impede the movement of goods, people and services along critical infrastructure.

This will include protecting international border crossings, 400-series highways, airports, ports, bridges and railways.

It will also include protecting the safe and essential movement of ambulatory and medical services, public transit, municipal and provincial roadways, as well as pedestrian walkways.

Fines for non-compliance will be severe, with a maximum penalty of \$100,000 and up to a year imprisonment.

We will also provide additional authority to consider taking away the personal and commercial licenses of anyone who doesn't comply with these orders.

This will not impede the rights of Ontarians to peacefully protest. It will provide additional tools to help stop the illegal occupation of Ottawa and the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor.

While these emergency orders will be temporary, we have every intention to bring new legislation forward that will make these measures permanent in law.

We are taking the steps necessary to support our police as they do what it takes to restore law and order.

And please... my friends... make no mistake...

THIS is a pivotal moment for our nation... the eyes of the world are upon us right now.

And what they are seeing... it's not who we are... this is not what Canada is about.

This is not how we try to change things here in Canada... We do it through the ballot box.

Because we are Canadian... and we are better than that.

And so... as a province... as a nation... we must collectively draw a line... we must stand for the values that define us.

We must come together right now... we must heal the divide that is fracturing our society... we must come together now... not as opponents... but as Canadians.

And we must see that the sacrifices we were forced to make... were made for a reason...

To see that because of the actions we took over the last 2 years... tens of thousands of lives were saved from COVID 19...

As hard as it has been... these sacrifices were necessary...

To protect tens of thousands of our neighbours... our friends... our family members...

And there is no price that we could put on that.

So... to the protestors I say... we have heard you. It is time to go...

To the autoworkers, truckers and all those affected by the Ambassador Bridge closure... I say... we will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the border is reopened.

To the people of Ottawa under siege... I say... we will ensure you are able to resume life and business as soon as possible.

And to our brave women and men in uniform... I want you to know that you have my full support as you work to manage this situation and do what it takes to bring these occupations to an end.

Thank you and God bless the people of Ontario.